



NEWS RELEASE

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources West Central Region

1300 W. Clairemont Ave., PO Box 4001, Eau Claire, WI 54702-2786
Phone: (715) 839-3715 TDD: 711
dnr.wi.gov www.wisconsin.gov

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CONTACTS: Mark Harings, environmental assistance coordinator, 715-831-3263
Randy Nedrelo, deputy director solid waste for La Crosse County, 608-789-7857
Ed Culhane, DNR communications, Eau Claire, 715-839-3715

SUBJECT: La Crosse County Solid Waste Dept. seeks Green Tier status

LA CROSSE – The La Crosse County Solid Waste Department, known for its progressive and inventive approaches to recycling and landfill management, has applied for Green Tier status.

Green Tier is a Wisconsin program, administered by the state Department of Natural Resources, designed to recognize and reward businesses and organizations that are committed to superior environmental performance.

The solid waste department, located at 6500 State Hwy. 16, is applying for Tier 1 of the program. Green Tier encourages businesses to voluntarily collaborate with the DNR to move beyond regulatory compliance. To be accepted an applicant must have a good environmental record, commit to exceeding legal standards for environmental performance and implement a DNR-certified environmental management system.

The La Crosse County Solid Waste Department services the more than 112,000 residents of La Crosse County. Additionally, the county's landfill system serves Buffalo and southern Trempealeau counties in Wisconsin as well as Houston and Wabasha counties in Minnesota.

The county operates a landfill complex which includes a sanitary landfill with segregated cells for ash disposal. The county also operates a construction and demolition landfill. Clean wood waste from construction and landscaping is shredded or otherwise processed for beneficial uses. Yard waste finds new life as compost. Shingles, asphalt and concrete are all recycled.

After collection, the disposal system diverts large amounts of solid waste to Xcel Energy's refuse derived fuel facility for the generation of electricity.

The following counties are in the West Central Region: Adams, Buffalo, Chippewa, Clark, Crawford, Dunn, Eau Claire, Jackson, Juneau, La Crosse, Marathon, Monroe, Pepin, Pierce, Portage, St. Croix, Trempealeau, Vernon and Wood. The Public Affairs Manager for DNR West Central Region is Ed Culhane, 715-839-3715.

The county department also manages the Household Hazardous Materials Program, which collects hazardous household wastes such as paints, used oil, antifreeze, pesticides, other household and agricultural wastes, unwanted medications and sharps from county residents free of charge and from small businesses for a fee.

The most recent addition to county services is the E-waste Program, which will accept residents' electronic items for a small fee.

In its commitment to environmental improvement, the department has initiated projects that go well beyond regulatory compliance. In 2009 they diverted nearly 99,000 tons of material from the waste stream and recovered materials such as wood waste, scrap metals, tires and aggregate that can be recycled.

The refuse that can be recovered and converted to energy, approximately 73,000 tons each year, is sent to the French Island Generating Plant that processes municipal solid waste into refuse-derived fuel. The landfill also accepts suitable wastes that can be used as an alternative to soil as daily landfill cover. It has planted ground cover and trees to decrease soil erosion and particulate emissions and to improve the aesthetics of the landfill.

As a Green Tier participant, the La Crosse County Solid Waste Department will move forward in its agreement with Gundersen Lutheran's medical center. Gundersen Lutheran will use landfill gas to meet all of its energy needs at the Onalaska medical campus.

In addition the county will develop and implement an environmental management system and a set of environmental performance indicators that measure the environmental impact of operations. It will also continue to improve procedures to meet the objectives of the La Crosse County Sustainability Plan.

The DNR will accept public comments on the La Crosse County Solid Waste Department's Green Tier application through Dec. 1, 2010. Specific information on this application and on the Green Tier program can be accessed on the Internet at:

<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/caer/cea/environmental/comment/index.htm>.

Comments may be directed to: Mark Harings, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, PO Box 4001, Eau Claire WI 54702-4001 or at mark.harings@wisconsin.gov or by calling 715-831-3263.